DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 185 UD 025 921

AUTHOR Kroeger, Marianne
TITLE Success for At-Risk Students. Conference Proceedings (Chicago, Illinois, February 4-7, 1987).
INSTITUTION North Central Regional Educational Lab., Elmhurst, IL.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 7 Feb 87
NOTE 31p.; The conference was co-sponsored by the North Central Regional Education Laboratory.
PUB TYPE Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Dropouts; *Educationally Disadvantaged; Educational Policy; *Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *High Risk Students; Instructional Improvement; *Low Achievement; Nontraditional Education; *Special Programs; Urban Education

ABSTRACT

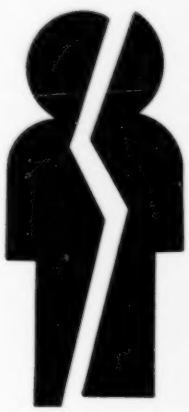
The 1987 conference on "Success for At-Risk Students" focused on the following types of students: (1) school dropouts; (2) teenage parents; (3) students with truancy problems; (4) young offenders; (5) substance abusers; (6) the poor; (7) those isolated in rural areas; and (8) students who have chronic difficulties with school work. The conference provided an opportunity for education professionals to analyze policies, programs and services for at-risk students and to examine alternatives to traditional educational systems. No immediate preventions or cures were presented, but suggestions were made for optimistic, persistent approaches in meeting the challenge of at-risk students. Summaries of eight presentations are given. The titles of 54 sessions are listed. (VM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

12-8-87

ED298185

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



Success for At-Risk Students

February 4-7, 1987
Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

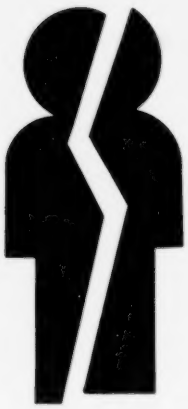
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

UD 025 921

NCREL
NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory is supported by contracts with the office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), the U.S. Department of Education. However, the contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI, and no official endorsement should be inferred.



Success for At-Risk Students

February 4-7, 1987
Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Conference Coordinator: Harriet Doss Willis
Prepared by: Marianne Kroeger

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NCREL
NORTH CENTRAL REGIONAL
EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Opening Banquet
Wednesday, February 4
John Porter 3

Policy Seminar for Educational Leaders
Thursday, February 5
Larry Cuban 5

Forum on Quality and Equality of Instruction
Thursday, February 5
Floretta Dukes McKenzie 9

Instructional Alternatives for At-Risk Students
Thursday, February 5
Mary Wilcynski 12

Luncheon
Thursday, February 5
Harold L. Hodgkinson 13

Concurrent Sessions
Thursday, February 5
List of Topics 16

The Tom Olson Show
Friday, February 6
Tom Olson, Moderator 18

Concurrent Sessions
Friday, February 6
List of Topics 20

Luncheon
Friday, February 6
Michelle Malchow and Scott Baylark 22

Instead of Having Sex...WAITT!
Friday, February 6
The Washington Area Improvisational Teen Theatre 24

Introduction

More than 800 people representing classroom teachers, school administrators, educational agency representatives, educational researchers, parents and state policy makers attended the "Success for At-Risk Students" Conference February 4-7, 1987 at Chicago's Palmer House Hotel. The conference was co-sponsored by the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL), state education agencies of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin, the Tri-Laboratory Urban Education Network and the State Facilitators of the National Diffusion Network in the NCREL region.

Amidst the major renaissance in education today is the growing concern that the roads to academic excellence may be blocked to those students for whom traditional modes of education often have failed. Risks for these students and consequently for their families and society at large are increasing. In Educational Reform for Disadvantaged Students: An Emerging Crisis, Henry M. Levin indicates that at least 30 percent of today's elementary and secondary school students in the United States are educationally at risk, and that this proportion will rise rapidly in the future.

Who are these students at high risk of low achievement? Actually, the definition may vary, but some general profiles include school dropouts, teenage parents, students with truancy problems, young offenders, substance abusers, the poor, those isolated in rural areas and students who have chronic difficulty with schoolwork. One seminar participant even suggested that the definition of "at-risk" may need to be broadened to include the "average" students simply because all students must feel they have something within that can be developed.

NCREL and its regional partners have identified "Success for At-Risk Students" as a topic which will continue to be the focus of significant activities over the next several years. The conference provided an opportunity for education professionals to analyze policies, programs and services for at-risk students as well as examine alternatives to meet student needs at various levels, including those at the school, district, state and regional levels.

Conference participants heard and met with such nationally known speakers as Harold Hodgkinson, Larry Cuban, Floretta Dukes McKenzie and John W. Porter. Audio tapes of the major sessions were available for purchase by seminar participants. Key presentations of the conference have been selected for summarization in this Proceedings document; this by no means is intended as a verbatim transcript.

Material covered in the conference ranged from the provocative to the poignant. If there was one overriding theme it was that despite the depressing picture painted by the demographic and economic statistics, the educational community--indeed the national community--cannot surrender. This nation and all the players involved--parents, students, educators--must not be overwhelmed. Needs of at-risk students must be met, and as one participant suggested, this in itself involves the taking of risks. "It's time to get dirty," he said. "You don't see a doctor pull his car up in front of a hospital and say he doesn't want to go inside because there are sick people in there." Repeated throughout the conference was the message that since traditional methods have failed with at-risk students, it will take non-traditional systems to succeed.

It is regrettable that two particularly moving presentations from the conference cannot be treated adequately in a narrative fashion. "Two Different Worlds: Student's Views" brought the lives of two radically different students--a farm girl from Minnesota and an urban boy from Chicago's controversial DuSable High School--into poignant focus for the audience. Although the emotion and drama are missing, highlights from their presentations nonetheless are summarized within. Similarly, performances by the Washington Area Improvisational Team Theatre (WAITT) lose their punch in paraphrase. Again, the messages of this troupe are highlighted within.

Just as the conditions which seem to breed at-risk students are complex and intricate, so are the paths to prevention and cure. The problems did not develop overnight; therefore, a quick fix does not exist. Meeting the challenge of at-risk students will require optimism and persistence. Removing the roadblocks to success will involve social change, financial resources and the support of every single person in the community--parents, educators, legislators, businesses. This is not someone else's problem; the effects of this crisis will have a significant impact on everyone. That the youth of this country

is its greatest resource will become more evident in the 21st Century, John Porter said during the opening banquet. Many of the youngsters will be minorities, poor and from urban centers. And they will be the youngsters who will have to support the Social Security System and defend the nation. Attention to this crisis will have to be focussed continually, not merely when it is politically expedient.

NCREL wishes to thank its collaborators and co-sponsors and all who gave of their time and talents for this conference.

Summaries

Opening Banquet, Wednesday, February 4, 1987

Keynote Speaker: John Porter, President, Eastern Michigan University

Note: Eastern Michigan University has joined with five urban school districts to create the Urban Education Alliance whose sole purpose is to reduce the indices of being at risk before they result in youth pathologies.

Setting the tone for the entire conference, John Porter encouraged the audience to keep the following points at the heart of every discussion over the coming days. (1) It must be acknowledged that school personnel work very hard to help at-risk students succeed with less than satisfactory results. (2) Compulsory attendance laws must be modified to remove the guilt of classroom failure. (3) New social structures must be created to handle students with pathologies that have occurred as a result of fundamental changes in American society. (4) The school cannot relinquish its responsibility of expecting satisfactory performance until at least three pathologies have emerged in a youth.

Porter believes that significant differences exist between a child at risk and a youth with pathologies. Schools may have some chance to help children who are poor, who are slow learners, who may occasionally have stolen property or experimented with drugs and sex--all indices of being at risk. Any three indices of being at risk will more than likely lead to two or more pathologies (poverty, drug dependency, premature pregnancy,

arrests). Such youth diseases, Porter believes, are not conditions which can be confronted in the classroom; educators simply are not trained for that function.

In order to prevent the continued rise in youth with two or more pathologies, removing barriers to success for at-risk children must become a national priority, Porter said. The solution does not lie only in increased teacher training programs and major classroom changes, but probably in a fundamental reordering of the relationship among society, the classroom and the student.

Porter mentioned four distinct, high risk populations that need increased attention: 1) inhibited preschoolers; 2) children who lack readiness skills in the first four grades; 3) elementary/middle school youngsters who are performing poorly in reading and math; and 4) high school at-risk students prone to develop two or more pathologies. To combat these areas, a new volunteer core to work with preschoolers is necessary; high school students (provided with college scholarships and encouraged to enter the teaching profession in the urban districts) should be recruited as a new teaching core for elementary youngsters at risk; a program providing Saturday and year-round new instructional technology in communications for elementary/middle school students is needed; and finally, a program is needed for at-risk high school students who may need a combination of employment experiences plus schooling.

The psychology for addressing strategies to remove barriers to success must assume that going to school is not what is important; that acquiring skills, being competitive and being socially respected is what's important, and that acquiring those may not take place in a classroom.

In concluding, Porter reminded the audience that educators must not be defensive about being unable to respond to all of the needs of all of the children of all of the people. He challenged the audience to recommit themselves to confronting the national crisis of students at risk. "Failure to act decisively, conscientiously and with planned purpose and human understanding," he said," will result in the continued loss of a large segment of each generation of people."

Policy Seminar for Educational Leaders, Thursday, February 5, 1987

Keynote Speaker: Larry Cuban, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, School of Education, Stanford University

In his presentation, Dr. Larry Cuban addressed the historical context of the educationally disadvantaged, options among the solutions and policy initiatives for state and local decision makers to consider. He began by outlining the major points he would cover. (1) Socio-economic and educational conditions are getting worse, exacting great personal loss and creating a two-tiered society. (2) Political decisions by policy makers determine whether at-risk children are targets for reform. (3) Current reform movements fueled at the state level will, over the next five years, prove more harmful than helpful to the disadvantaged. (4) Some policies and programs are better for the disadvantaged than others, but there is no single program or policy that will help. However, there are lessons policy makers can use.

He lamented the lack of a neutral to positive working language to discuss children referred to as "at-risk" or "disadvantaged" while admitting he had no new language to offer. He reminded his audience, however, that language shapes attitudes and conveys values. Consequently, words such as "poor," "ethnic," "non-English-speaking," etc. should be remembered as describing background and not indicating individual potential.

Quoting from Henry Levin's statistics, Cuban pointed out that while in the decade of the 1970s, 16 percent of all children lived in poverty, between 1979 and 1983, that figure jumped to 22 percent--an increase of 4 million children. In 1982, Levin estimates that 30 percent of all children came from poor and non-English-speaking homes. When such a large number of students with low academic performance exists, a larger proportion of the future work force will be undereducated or at least lacking in basic credentials. Unemployment rates for ethnic and minority persons--rates already running between 40 and 50 percent-- will increase. Public assistance will have to expand, and crime rates probably will rise. There will be pressure to increase taxes to underwrite welfare, police, jail construction and court staffs. Thus, the consequences of not educating those

in need ricochets through individuals' lives and piles up social costs. Obviously schools alone cannot handle these outcomes, but any comprehensive social program must at least include schools.

The message is an old one: society can pay now or it can pay later. The poor children are rediscovered from time to time, and if politicians are pressed with social problems, schooling and an increased role of the schools are moved up high on the priority list. Consider this quote from a reformer speaking to issues of urban problems:

> "If the United States is to continue on its present course of advancement and progress, the city must be made clean, healthy, moral, and it must be well-governed. The great problems connected with the city are the root question of education. The school must broaden the civic and social life of the entire community. If children are found in crowded classrooms who are not readily amenable to the discipline there, it should be clear that the correct kind of training is not given them. Children from all kinds of homes and home environments should not be treated exactly alike if good results are to follow our efforts. Financially, and let the taxpayer take notice, it is more desirable to treat the case now than later. These are not bad children. Improper training and environments have made them what they are today."

"Today" is 1907, and the speaker is Frank Carlton, an urban reformer at the turn of the century.

Cuban discussed the periodic rediscovery of the poor. Thirty years ago, he said, the rural migrants were "discovered." In the late 1950s and early 1960s, drop out rates that had been ignored for years suddenly became frightening. The Civil Rights Movement harnassed national Democratic Party victories and produced an avalanche of policies and programs aimed at the poor, the non-English-speaking and eventually the handicapped children. These victories turned sour, however, in the face of the Vietnam War and in racial conflicts over inequities in the late 1960s. Republican victories shifted the focus from federal intervention to benign neglect in the 1970s. And in the midst of state-driven reform in the 1980s, issues of the disadvantaged failed to make national headlines, with the exception of a brief flurry of activity during the Carter Administration.

But now there are the new political murmurrings about the poor. There are the fears about a permanent underclass, a runaway drug problem, overcrowded schools plus a new term--"at-risk." Corporate officials concerned about an undereducated work force have

jumped on the bandwagon and are exerting political pressure. The Secretary of Education has promised to make education of the disadvantaged the major priority over the next two years, albeit with a reduced overall budget for education. The Secretary has joined a long line of public officials since the turn of the century who look to the schools to resolve thorny, national problems instead of to the social institutions that work more directly with the ethnic poor.

This society is in the midst of an educational reform movement powered by state efforts and measurement-driven instruction. In response to national reports on academic deficiency, governors and legislatures enacted longer school days, more school days, higher graduation standards, more tests and greater ties between what is taught and what is tested. Many states initiated entry level salary scales for teachers, merit pay schemes, competency tests for new and veteran teachers and stiffer evaluation systems, all of which, Cuban noted, were truly well-intentioned efforts. They will produce immediate, visible gains, and success stories of schools transformed will appear in the media. However, the benefits largely will be for those students who come from working class, business and professional homes. For at-risk students from poor, ethnic and non-English-speaking homes, however, the next decade will prove more harmful than helpful. Gains will be made, but these gains will be achieved at a price of increased tracking for low achievers, rote learning of low level skills and skimpy content, unemotional relationships between students and teachers, and ultimately the continued problems of school dropouts.

Over the past five years, a formula of sorts has evolved from research findings on effective schools and practitioner wisdom. School boards seek out what works elsewhere and try exact or similar methods in their own districts. A formula with the ultimate purpose of lifting test scores, however, exacts a price which Cuban said few policy makers or practitioners have yet to calculate.

Increased uniformity is one price, and from it emerges the notion that there is a single, best curriculum. Tedious tasks become elevated to the status of effective instruction, and learning becomes a series of tasks to be completed, placed in a folder and judged by a teacher or a computer. In the rush to make instruction efficient and scientific, Cuban warned, the craft and joyous rewards of teaching are smothered.

A second price is the narrowing of the educational agenda. While narrowing the agenda was necessary to meet the expectations of the last half century, citizens and educators must be concerned about shrinking too far the district's agenda for schools with large numbers of at-risk students to the least common denominator.

The final price, Cuban said, is that the push for effective schools by states and cities where there are large numbers of disadvantaged students contributes unintentionally to a two-tiered system of schooling: one for the poor and one for the non-poor. Believing that low income students can learn is the single, most important moral victory of the effective schools movement. But learning is now equated with higher test scores. Higher test scores may mean that the student knows more and possesses certain skills. But depending on the test, it may also mean that students recognize familiar test items, are test-wise, or simply that the use of old norms or the scoring of the test account for the increases.

The continued narrowing of the curriculum to what will be tested is far more prevalent in low income schools than in affluent ones. Low expectations in reasoning and problem-solving skills for low-income students result in these important functions disappearing from the curriculum. The hidden message is that low-income students cannot handle "this hard stuff" until they learn to read, write and compute. The message not only is hidden, but also is false. Reasoning and problem-solving can be and have been integrated into reading, writing, arithmetic and subject matter courses in elementary and secondary levels for all students. It is done in private and affluent public schools. Such a divorce between critical thinking and the basic skills in classrooms with disadvantaged students tends to widen the gap between schools for the poor and schools for the affluent.

Cuban cautioned against extracting the wrong message from his criticism of state-powered reforms and measurement-driven instruction. There is much value in the reform movement. Standardized achievement tests are here to stay, and they give some important information if they are used. But they will overwhelm the curriculum and instruction for the disadvantaged, and in Cuban's opinion, this is educationally harmful. Reliance on direct instruction (recitation, homework, whole group instruction, constant assessment) in low-income schools will work for some students in some grades for some

content, but not for all. It drives the level of skills and intellectual attainment to the bargain basement of schooling, Cuban believes. It will deaden teaching and squash interest in learning if used as a prescription, Cuban said.

From this dismal picture, one wonders if there are any lessons that policy makers and practitioners can take from past efforts to improve schooling for the disadvantaged. There are, and Cuban offered the following guiding principles. (1) There is no swift, single or cheap solution for effective schooling of the at-risk child. (2) Neither states nor the federal government should prescribe what teachers and administrators ought to do in their schools. There is no one best program or style or curriculum. (3) Improvement is tied to each school site. Variations will exist even among schools in the same district. (4) To produce enduring improvements at the school site, principals and teachers require more independence than is now permitted by local and state agencies. There must be efforts to strike a better balance between autonomy and accountability. (5) Affecting change depends upon what the on-site implementers think and do, and the quality of help they receive. The sum total of all these principles is the reliance on the infantry of reform--the men and women who staff the schools, not the policy makers. (6) The atmosphere most conducive to improvement for students most in need is that of the elementary school. The structure permits innovation and flexibility. High schools remain candidates for change, but their structures would need altering to recreate the atmosphere of an elementary school.

In conclusion, Cuban emphasized that improving schools for the disadvantaged requires steady work by many people with strong hearts and persistent spirits.

Forum on Quality and Equality of Instruction, Thursday, February 5, 1987

Keynote Speaker: Floretta Dukes McKenzie, Superintendent of Schools, Washington, DC

Floretta Dukes McKenzie went straight to the heart of the matter by saying that unless problems in urban schools are addressed with enthusiasm, optimism and hope, they will not be solved. When the reform movement began, she said, initial focus was on the talented youth and the need to set higher standards. Mechanisms were not put in place

for all students to achieve. While other industrialized nations moved closer to a 95 percent graduation rate, the rate in the U.S. declined from 75 percent to nearly 70 percent. Some people looked at that decline and felt the curriculum must be more challenging and, therefore, a lower rate was good. But it was not good. Some students were leaving high school unprepared to do anything, and this had a great impact on the community at large.

Echoing the sentiments of many, McKenzie said that schools alone cannot solve the problems of students at risk. But schools must move from a reactive stance, she said. Schools are mirrors of their communities and as such are permitting disadvantaged children to fail. The messages being sent out by the community is that it is OK for low-income and other disadvantaged youth to fail.

McKenzie challenged her audience to listen to John Naisbitt (Megatrends) when he said the country's institutions must be reinvented. McKenzie cautioned that security can breed complacency, and complacency has no place in education. Educators and policy makers must demonstrate a willingness to change in a changing world.

Solutions in education are transient, McKenzie said. What works today cannot be expected necessarily to work next year. To educate all of the children will require the concerted effort of the total community --people both with and without children; business owners and workers; church-goers and non-church-goers.

Offering insights with specific examples, McKenzie said educators must pay attention to a child's background. For example, a student for whom heaven and earth was turned to enroll him/her in a work program quits the job. One may find that no one else in the family holds a job; the child doesn't want to feel different. Or, consider the student who comes close to graduating and then fails. He/she may come from a family where no one has been graduated from high school. The child doesn't want to make the others feel inferior.

In addressing the needs and problems of at-risk students, McKenzie said attention must focus on the results of education rather than concentrate on the process. Instead of continual emphasis on the student/teacher ratio, books, aides and so forth, attention

must shift to how many students succeed and what they can do.

For the at-risk students, educators must show that there is something for them, and often they must be shown that there is something for others in the household, too. Assistance can be offered to enroll family members in adult programs, and they can be invited to work as volunteers.

The message must be carried to the total community that the statistics can change if everyone works together. Educators must believe it and the minute they don't, they better leave the profession, McKenzie said. The job at hand is to make everyone successful. Programs must be developed for all students who need a different environment for learning, and this includes the gifted as well as the at-risk.

McKenzie said educators already know more than necessary to solve the problem, and she acknowledged that resources, of course, are necessary. But in describing her own attitude toward her budgets she said, "I don't want one more of anything if I'm not showing some improved results for it." Since becoming vocal about her belief, her budgets have increased, she added. She stressed the importance of believing that schools are going to do the job for all of the children and then selling that notion to the communities.

In conclusion, McKenzie repeated that educators must vary the treatment, especially for at-risk students. This does not mean lowering standards, but designing alternative programs to meet the needs. There must be a change in the development and recruitment of teacher personnel; administrators must change; more peer counseling and tutorial activities must be developed; the media must be educated and encouraged to strive for more of a balance so they just don't print the horror stories from education; and the students together with everyone must believe that they are worth the risks it takes to make their lives better. "Yes, we have many students at risk," McKenzie said, "but we also are at risk if we don't save them."

Instructional Alternatives for At-Risk Students, Thursday, February 5, 1987

Selected Panelist: Mary Wilcynski, Principal, Metro Secondary School, Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Of a total student population of 18,000 in Cedar Rapids, IA, 600 are enrolled in the Metro Secondary School, and all are dropouts from conventional high schools. According to Mary Wilcynski, 150 of the 600 are following the GED program, and the rest are pursuing a Cedar Rapids High School diploma. (Requirements are the same.)

The school is run much like a kindergarten, with morning and afternoon shifts. Structured classes are held four days per week. Each Friday morning the staff meets to discuss their problems and successes, then they spend the rest of that day on home visits. The goal of this program, said Wilcynski, is to get to know the kids as well as the kids will permit and to be as much a part of their lives as they will allow.

The school offers a full array of basic skills classes, survival classes of basic math, language arts, reading and writing as well as electives in home and family areas, industrial arts and art. "Vocademics" is another feature of the school. This program exists to promote basic skills knowledge with a business application, not to foster careers in specific industries. Five "vocademic" programs are in current operation; a sixth is on the drawing board. An 18-acre truck farm produces vegetables which are sold to the community in farmers' markets. A day care facility is another operation where students may work. Students with children of their own can take advantage of the facility and pay in time rather than dollars. The food service operation includes a bakery, catering service and restaurant. A bicycle repair shop teaches not only the skill of cycle repair, but also sponsors an annual bicycle trip since many of the students in that program are cycling enthusiasts. And Metro operates the district laundry service and handles all of the towels for the physical education programs. (Metro does not hold PE classes; they found that a PE requirement was one of the reasons kids dropped out of school.) The sixth "vocademic" program to be launched is a clock factory.

Wilcynski described the Metro staff as a truly dedicated one which believes each person deserves dignity. Staff members believe that every student has potential; they set high but reasonable and appropriate expectations for the students; and students and educators work together in a mutual atmosphere of respect.

Luncheon, Thursday, February 5, 1987

Keynote Speaker: Harold L. Hodgkinson, Senior Fellow, American Council of Education, Washington, DC

Note: Hodgkinson's booklet, "All One System: Demographics of Education, Kindergarten Through Graduate School," was distributed to members of the audience. However, his presentation also drew upon demographic information not included in the handout.

Harold L. Hodgkinson set forth three topics to be covered in his presentation: (1) a careful examination of the new information of retention--factors that keep kids in school--which he said is not the same as the opposite of dropouts; (2) the demographics that make those things possible; and (3) how to relate the demographics to specific regions.

Indicating the status of the country as of December 1986, Hodgkinson pointed out that 34,000 people were over the age of 100. This figure is expected to triple because there are 2.8 million people over the age of 85, and half of them voted in the last presidential election, representing the second highest category of voter participation. They out-voted the baby boomers almost two to one. These are people whose interest in public education is declining. The trick, Hodgkinson said, is to convert parental responsibility for education to civic responsibility.

Forty percent of the poor in this country are children, according to information from the U.S. Department of Education, with 24 percent of all children below the federal poverty level. (Ten percent of the poor are the elderly.) Hodgkinson referred to a paper by Yankelovich which argues that issues are run for office the same way candidates are. Drugs won as an issue in the last year, Hodgkinson said; poverty lost.

Of the 286 black mayors in the country, one-third are in cities that do not have a black majority. This may suggest that ethnic background is not the first criterion in an election; this is not true everywhere, but it is happening. Hispanics buy $60 billion worth of products and services each year. Burger King plans to have two Hispanics on its corporate board by late 1987 because Hispanics consume 22 percent of what Burger King cooks.

In 1960, 60 percent of U.S. households typified the Norman Rockwell image of a working dad, housewife mom and two school-age children. Today only 4 percent of households fit that picture. Why? Hodgkinson stated that the baby boomers (70 million people) generally are refusing to get married, and those who do are refusing to have children. These two factors create a very low fertility rate among whites particularly. And Hodgkinson said it must be remembered that 35 percent of marriages in the country today are remarriages.

Forty-six percent of freshmen entering Berkeley in the fall of 1986 were white; 5 percent were black; 7 percent Hispanic; and 31 percent were Asian-American. A relatively small minority group has moved in and been so successful in the educational system that they're moving to the very top in terms of professorships. Tomorrow's graduate school enrollments will consist almost entirely of Anglo and Asian students. This is not an area of concern, Hodgkinson said, but rather a need to re-focus what is meant by "minority." "Here's a group whose parents make more money than whites," he said. " Do we give them student financial aid because they're minorities?"

Hodgkinson offered more indicators of the changing world. Two-thirds of the world's immigration is to the U.S., with 83 percent of U.S. immigrants coming from South America and Asia. Forty-three percent of supermarket shoppers in this country are male, while one-third of all GM cars in this country are bought by women. Of June 1986 college graduates, 20 percent got a job that required no college at all. (Think, Hodgkinson said, of what this means to improving retention.) Three and one-half million people worked full-time last year, yet were classified as below the poverty line. They would have made more money on welfare, yet they continued to work.

Demographers have a predictive power that no economist can match, Hodgkinson said. They can tell the state of the United States by the year 2000 in terms of population, plus

or minus one-quarter of one percent.

What can be done to improve retention? Hodgkinson said the methods that work are so simple he can't understand why no one uses them. Retention can be improved when

-you can get the kids to go to school;
-parents are part of the team;
-the principal is the leader of the school;
-there are clear goals in the classes and in the schools;
-students are rewarded for achievement and they are expected to achieve;
-resources are front-loaded so that the first years of school are the most important; and
-when there is a link between the school and other youth resources such as scouts, clubs, etc.

In addressing the problem of getting kids to school, Hodgkinson pointed out that the average dropout is a kid who goes to school only one day a week. Truant officers have no jurisdiction and no power. Because of recent court decisions, a truant officer cannot force a kid to go back to school. In Stockton, California, when truant officers were made part of the school team, truancy declined by 30 percent (as did daytime burglaries in the area).

And kids need to feel good about themselves, or they will drop out-- the boys for jobs and the girls for babies. Both groups usually wind up regretting their decisions. Fortunately the safety net of the GED program allows 750,000 people a year to make up for past mistakes. One out of ten diplomas awarded in 1986 was a GED.

What works? The Head Start Program, for example, has enjoyed tremendous success. The High Scope Program in Ypsilanti, Michigan, showed on the basis of a longitudinal study that for the control group of students who reached high school, the cost of the Head Start program compared to the cost of not having prisons and drug detoxification centers for that group represented a savings of $4 for every $1 invested in Head Start. The cost of having Head Start or not having it can be calculated throughout the country.

What will have a future impact on retention? Hodgkinson said adult illiteracy is a

problem because illiterate adults tend to have children who won't make it to graduation; this problem is compounded by the fact that the areas of the country with the worst illiteracy problems are the states with the fewest resources. Similarly, the feminization of poverty--women raising children without support from the father and without access to job skills--is bound to have a large impact.

The white population in this country is on a downward slide. In fact, of the NATO ("Western") countries of the world, none shows an increased fertility rate. At the turn of the century, whites comprised 30 percent of the world's population; now it is 18 percent and dropping to about 9 percent. Hodgkinson wondered whether the West can lead the world if it is 9 percent of the population. The average white female in this country today is 31 years old; the average black, 25; and the average Hispanic, 22. Who will have the most children?

The increases in poverty, in children who do not speak English and the numbers of children with physical and emotional handicaps coupled with the declining birth rate in the white population poses a problem to everyone. Hodgkinson said that when his father retired, 17 workers paid into his Social Security trust fund. Today it's 3.4 workers per retiree, and when Hodgkinson retires, it will be 3.0, and one of those will be non-white. "It's vital to me personally," he said, "that minorities in America get a good education and a splendid job."

To conclude, Hodgkinson said that in light of the declining numbers of students, schools and educators must create winners where they used to be able to pick them.

Concurrent Sessions, Thursday, February, 5, 1987

Note: A total of 28 concurrent afternoon sessions were presented, 14 from 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. and 14 more between 4:00 and 5:30 p.m. Two of the sessions, "The Social Costs of Dropping Out of School in the Midwest" and "STEP and BRIDGE--Two National Demonstrations of Dropout Prevention for 14 and 15 Year Olds" were recorded on audio cassette. Listed below are the focal points of each session. Special thanks to the many presenters who so willingly shared their time and experiences.

- A history and overview of Indiana's statewide effort to reduce class size in order to improve learning and instruction for grades K-3

- The structure, daily procedures and philosophical concepts of Metro Secondary School in Cedar Rapids, IA

- Highlights of "Reading Power," a nationally validated staff development program designed to assist the integration of reading skills throughout general classroom instruction

- The changing relationships between schools and workplaces with particular emphasis on occupational forecasts in the Midwest

- Personal and social costs of dropping out of school in the Midwest

- A school-based model for keeping pregnant and parenting adolescents in school used in current approaches by the National Association of State Boards of Education

- Options for at-risk high school students in Chicago Public Schools

- Teacher/parent partnership experiences drawn from projects across the nation by the Home and School Institute

- The history of FOCUS, a program successful in managing the behavior of middle school, junior high school and senior high school students and leading to improved attendance and achievement

- IMPACT, a program for direct instruction and peer coaching of critical thinking

- The City-As-School model which explores an alternative institution based on experiential and external learning

- RISE, a school effectiveness program operating successfully in Milwaukee

- The role of thinking skills and technology in the learning process

- The use of "Video Encyclopedia of the 20th Century" as an educational resource which motivates learning

- Effects of educational achievement in the Midwest in terms of employment, occupation, income and public assistance support

- Programs and services provided in the Illinois program initiative for at-risk preschool children

- 1985 ACT scores in the NCREL region compared with variables such as family income, city size, class rank, etc.

- The Urban Education Alliance and its collaborative approach to the problems of school dropouts and youth unemployment

- Organizational aspects of educational settings in alternative schools which contribute to intellectual and social development

- Suicide

- INSERVICE, a validated National Diffusion Network staff development program which has effectively enhanced student attitudes while improving cognitive growth

- STEP, a program aimed at 14- and 15-year olds and at-risk youth in five cities, and BRIDGE, a year-round dropout prevention program for 9th and 10th graders

- Components of early childhood, early identification and early intervention programs

- Ann Arbor's (MI) Student-Parent Center which provides support to teen parents to insure they complete school and attain skills for achieving financial independence

- Practices in eight Chicago schools which result in increased and/or reduced dropout rates

- How "Writing to Read" works

- Using computer and videodisc technology to help at-risk students develop concepts and attitudes which help them think and learn more effectively

- A new model for rural students at risk

The Tom Olson Show, Friday, February 6, 1987

Moderator: Tom Olson, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Corporate Development, Isocast Systems, Inc., Clackamus, OR, and former Executive Director of NCREL

Panelists: Nadia T. Bagenstos, Manager for the Writing Instruction, Principal Leadership and Dissemination Programs at the Southeastern Educational Improvement Laboratory Research Triangle Park, NC
Charlotte Blackman, Middle School Teacher and Teacher Facilitator, Dyett Middle School, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL
William A. Blakey, Legislative Assistant to Senator Paul Simon, U.S. Senator from Illinois
Nelvia Brady, Staff Associate, Chicago Community Trust, Chicago, IL
Linda Lenz, Education Reporter, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, Chicago, IL
Rodolfo Serna, Principal, Kelvyn Park High School, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL
James B. Turner, parent of children attending Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL

Note: This session, presented in a talk show format, was intended to allow interaction among participants and bring together different perspectives. Further, it was intended to go beyond surface images of at-risk youth to improve understanding of the problems and issues; to better grasp how big the

problem is; and to raise questions regarding why there is so much interest now if this is not a new problem. This summary is arranged to reflect key points made by participating panelists and audience members, even though specific attribution does not appear.

Despite the public image of despair and defeat regarding the problems which make students at risk, society must not allow itself to feel overwhelmed. It is far too easy to say the problem cannot be treated with limited resources and then do nothing. To help overcome this public image of despair, it is important to educate members of the media about things that work for at-risk kids; to reach the editors and reporters about what is important and how the material can make for exciting stories.

A careful review must be made to effectively try to meet the needs of at-risk students in the schools. Instead of automatically adding on new programs, educators should look at the systems in place and talk to the students to find out what they think. Schools already are held suspect by their communities and often need to show what they're doing with present budgets before pleading for increases. Too many parents and other members of the community also are wary of funded programs; they have seen too many start off with a bang and then die.

Are students really worse off than they were 20 years ago? Probably there are more students at greater academic risk today in terms of basic skills, but 20 years ago at-risk students may not have been in school in all cases because they had dropped out. Society is different today than it was 20 years ago as well. In many cases, there is not the demand for achievement there once was; parents seem to be less involved with their children's academic performance.

And certainly those parents who are involved with and concerned about their children's academic performance are on a different schedule than they were 20 years ago. Schools and teachers must face reality. Parents cannot deal with the school community between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. because they're at work. There must be some structural change.

More community involvement must be generated, and schools should look to the corporate and business resources in their communities. Many can provide volunteers. A

book published by the Institute for Educational Leadership addresses organizing the community for political purposes to accomplish what is necessary. (A Guide for the Powerless and Those Who Don't Know Their Own Power; $3.00 per copy; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 K Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.)

It must be recognized that the teacher is the single most important person in the school. The ability of the teacher to relate to the student is critical. Teachers need to control the controlable, make activities relevant and elicit parental support. Students must feel there is a reason to expend the effort. And schools must be careful that the programs for the students at risk do not become attractive to the "average" student. Indeed, it may be necessary to include the "average" student in defining those at risk because each child needs to feel he/she has something to offer the world.

Schools are no longer opportunity centers; they are obligation centers. Schools are obliged to provide success for all students. The learning of defeat is not terminal. In the primary grades it can be prevented; in the intermediate grades it can be cured; and by middle school years it can be set back so that when a child enters high school there is self-esteem upon which to build.

Concurrent Sessions, Friday, February 6, 1987

Note: A total of 26 concurrent sessions were presented, 14 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. and 12 from 2:30 to 3:45 p.m. "Using Parental Involvement to Deliver Pre-K Reading and Mathematics Services to Children At Risk," "The Ohio Reading Recovery Program" and "Effective Techniques to Prevent School Failure for At-Risk 4-5-6-Year Old Children" were recorded on audio cassette. Listed below are the focal points of each session. Again, many thanks to the presenters.

- The Zero Based Drop Out Program in Minnesota and how partnerships help students at risk
- Process and procedures used in planning and implementing the Flint School District's (MI) major compensatory education programs
- The role of higher education, planning model programs and the use of networks in combatting the problems of at-risk youth
- The whole child

- Needs of today's students and instructional strategies which will help students become active rather than passive learners
- STAMM (Systematic Teaching And Measuring Mathematics) as an exemplary mathematics program
- The SAGE PROGRAM to foster the development of higher order thinking skills and stimulation of academic achievement
- How a functional, content-relevant approach to reading instruction contrasts with the traditional general literacy approach
- Iowa's statewide conference for students attending alternative schools and programs
- Project SUCCESS, a teacher training program for teachers of at-risk 9th grade students
- How the WASATCH Education System views the computer as a curriculum change agent
- Strategies for developing oral languages among students with limited proficiency in English
- Two functional prototypes of Wisconsin policy in action for children at risk
- Wisconsin children at risk initiative with a functional prototype for state policy
- Demonstration of geometry software for the Apple II computers
- Techniques and teacher inservice program in the Ohio Reading Recovery Program
- Preliminary information on the At-Risk Student Project of the National Center on Effective Secondary Schools
- A vocational education program specifically designed to meet the needs of urban high school youth
- Drug and alcohol prevention strategies for elementary students
- Using computer conferencing to join students in a global classroom
- Teacher training enabling teachers to use computer software to develop thinking skills in classrooms and laboratory settings
- How to start a state alternative education association
- Truancy
- Techniques to identify learning styles and developmental levels in language, auditory, visual and motor areas of young, at-risk students
- Milwaukee's Children At Risk Program as a functional model for urban communities

- Using multimedia instructional materials to help low reading groups in grades 2 to 6

Luncheon, Friday, February 6, 1987

Keynote Speakers: Michelle Malchow, Brewster High School, Brewster,MN
Scott Baylark, DuSable High School, Chicago, IL

Note: The speakers are students representing very different schools and communities. Both presented their views on the quality of life in their schools, characteristics of students who are at risk and recommendations for educators. The poignancy of their presentations is lost in this narrative summation, and this is regrettable.

Because she lives on a farm, the growth cycle is very important to Michelle Malchow. Autumn represents harvest and harvest symbolizes hard work and the end of toil; it is last in the growth cycle. For many, the farm crisis is the final harvest. Hearing about the crisis and trying to live through it are two very different things, Malchow said. One-third--214,000--of America's farmers are in financial trouble. But the crisis in rural America, she said, is not about numbers and economic indicators; it is about people and families, emotions and dreams, lifestyles and wonderment.

Her family is losing its farm, and each family member found a different way of trying to cope. Her sister buried herself in the fictional world of novels and lost herself in study; her brother developed a mouth and became obnoxious; she turned to poetry. Her poem "The Mail Is In" portrayed the pain and shattered dreams of a farming family in crisis.

At school, Malchow said, no one talked about the problems. School became a place to go to get away from them. Some of her friends found escape in sports or study; others became critical and judgmental; still others stopped caring about anything, and their schoolwork suffered along with them. Malchow recognized the difficult task teachers had trying to deal with the rural students who were facing very adult problems.

For all students today, Malchow said, education becomes a harvest. Seeds of knowledge are planted by teachers so students can mature and grow. Her own education became a very important part of her life; seeds had been planted, and she grew to love drama,

poetry and speech. She reaped a bountiful harvest, she said, not only by making it to the state speech contest, but by being a part of the family that developed from the speech team. They were family because they knew each other and what to expect; because it was their first year and they all were green; because an educator had planted the seeds and told them they could go out and harvest the rewards; and because the speech team worked as a family should work--together.

Malchow thanked educators everywhere for being family. Particularly in small, rural settings, teachers have more contact with students through classes, extracurriculars and community involvement. This, she said, enables teachers and students to know each other very well. With all the problems she was facing at home, Malchow said it was comforting to go to school where there were educators who cared as a family. She concluded her presentation with her poem, "A Family of Five."

•••

Scott Baylark described Chicago's controversial DuSable High School as an interesting place to learn. He was cautioned against going there, but he grew up in the city's predominantly black south side, and he wanted to attend DuSable. He said the south side is no Palm Springs, but it isn't as bad as people say, either. When he was growing up, he never had any confrontations with people from the housing projects or gang members, but he said he learned to be alert on the street and wise to the ways.

Baylark described himself as a "nerd." He didn't have many friends, and he stayed out of trouble. In grade and middle school, the teachers always took an interest in him, and he said he didn't understand the attention. In sixth grade he took classes with eighth graders, but he was still a nerd. "It dampened my social life," he said," but I learned a lot."

There is much on the south side to lure youngsters into the horrors, he said, and some of his friends turned to the wrong side of life. It was hard to keep a balance, and a lot of his friends couldn't handle the responsibility of choosing between right and wrong. He described the pain of talking to someone who used to get good grades and now is lost.

It takes a lot of character to make it and stay on the right side, and Baylark said he realizes that. Now when his teachers encourage him to try different programs, he looks forward to it. Stressing the importance of teachers, he said they make students feel that they have something special. His teachers made him realize that a lot of people were depending upon him to succeed. Teachers, he said, were like guardian angels--even when you're out of school and away from them you can sense their presence.

If you keep your values and priorities straight, if you have caring parents and teachers, you can go anywhere and make it. This is the message Baylark gives to student groups he addresses. He tells them you have to be yourself and go with the flow sometimes, as long as the flow doesn't carry you away so that you lose control.

His mother "got on his nerves," and he's thankful that she did. He realizes that because she cared enough to check on his homework and proofread it and make sure he was in the house at a certain time that she cared about him. That wasn't the case with some of his friends. He said it depressed him sometimes that his classmates didn't have parents and teachers who took a special interest in them.

Instead of Having Sex...WAITT!, Friday, February 6, 1987

Performers: The Washington Area Improvisational Teen Theatre (WAITT), Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts, Washington, DC, Margaret Copemann, Director

Note: A drama troupe of 14 Washington teenagers, under the direction of Margaret Copemann, presented a variety of skits illustrating common dilemmas in the lives of teens related to sexuality, peer pressure and parent-child communication. The troupe's performances are intended to provide information, raise awareness of available clinical services, encourage responsible sexual attitudes and behavior without threatening teens or their parents. Unfortunately, the performances cannot be adequately captured in narrative form, but highlights are attempted nonetheless.

WAITT's performances are based upon the premise that a teen will be more likely to listen to a peer than to an adult. WAITT doesn't preach; the skits performed by the troupe impart the messages that it's OK to say "no" to sex; to say "yes" to a career; and that it's OK to stay in school.

In realistic tones, the performers stressed situations in which both girls and boys said "no" to sex, but also situations in which responsible decisions about birth control had to be made. One scene emphasized that birth control is an important decision to be shared by both the male and female.

Moving scenes included a girl who taped up her abdomen to keep her pregnancy a secret (and her reputation intact) and later gave birth to a child who was unable to survive the problems created in the womb; a boy who turned against his girlfriend when she became pregnant and later regretted his behavior and wondered about his son; and frank discussions among teenagers about their fear of sexually transmitted diseases, of pregnancy, of not knowing "how" to have sex and their fears about not being ready to become sexually active.

Following the skits, the audience posed questions, most of which centered upon how the troupe's performances are received by teens, by parents and by members of the church community. Positive reception by all groups was reported.

Perhaps the most candid question was whether or not the performers were as at-ease with their subject matter as they appeared. The initial laughter of the performers indicated that such was not always the case. But did it also mean that they knew the person really was asking "How can you be so at ease with this topic?"

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) works to improve education for students in elementary and secondary schools. To accomplish this, NCREL helps education leaders identify priorities and solve problems by creating awareness of research-based information, encouraging its development, and demonstrating its use.

NCREL is one of nine regional educational laboratories in the United States, serving seven states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

A not-for-profit corporation, NCREL is funded primarily through the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U.S. Department of Education. Some of NCREL's activities are supported or co-sponsored by educational agencies and organizations in the Laboratory's region.

NCREL strives to earn a reputation for quality, creativity, effectiveness, timeliness, and responsiveness to educational priorities and problems in the region. The following activities illustrate the range of NCREL's topics and projects:

State Policy Seminars State legislators, staff of education agencies, and representatives of local districts receive analysis and interpretation of educational research and current issues at these seminars. Education leaders who participate in seminars share their perspectives on policy developments, implementation, and effectiveness.

Inservice and Staff Development Programs NCREL enriches staff development and inservice programs with materials and designs developed by NCREL staff. The Laboratory works with education agencies and professional associations to design programs for various educational settings and to tailor workshops that meet the needs of particular districts. Laboratory staff can provide educators with technical assistance to help them plan and develop programs.

Technical Assistance Services NCREL offers technical services in collaboration with state agencies, intermediate service units, and other consultants and trainers. School districts, singly or in consortia, can work with NCREL for help in planning, implementing, or evaluating programs for their own priorities and problems.

Information Resources NCREL develops and provides education agencies throughout the region with resources they can compile and distribute. These resources include the CLIPBOARD for notice of new publications, reviews, and interpretations of research, as well as conference proceedings, descriptions of exemplary programs, and reports of ongoing research, development, and evaluation projects.

Presentations NCREL staff make presentations to educational practioners and other interested groups on summaries of recent research findings and descriptions of promising practices and policies. Examples of topics include strategies for serving at-risk students, characteristics of effective schools, effective staff development strategies, teacher education and planning, instructional leadership, and thinking skills.

Networks and Special Interest Groups NCREL works with many organizations to exchange and analyze outcomes of educational research and development. Education in urban and rural settings, applications of technology to instruction, and teacher preparation are some of the issues these groups address.

Invitational Forums and Meetings. The Laboratory sponsors forums and meetings to develop agendas for future research and for plans to improve educational practice. Some of the issues that have been addressed in these events are instructional design, innovations in technology, incentives for teachers, and dimensions of students' thinking.

Conferences NCREL sponsors and conducts conferences that address issues and topics of priority in its service region. The Laboratory typically invites co-sponsors to plan and organize these conferences. The conference may be regional in nature or NCREL may join collaborators in other regions to conduct conferences of national scope and interest.

The Laboratory was founded in October, 1984, by a coalition of the region's seven chief state school officers and nineteen deans of higher education. NCREL is governed by a 28-member Board of Directors that includes the representatives of many constituencies important to education--teachers, school administrators, state legislators, state and local board members, business and industry, agriculture, and labor--as well as the seven chief state school officers and representatives of the deans.

For More Information NCREL invites all education leaders in the region to participate in its activities and to inquire about available services and products. For further information, write or call:

NCREL
The Office of Regional Programs
295 Emroy Avenue
Elmhurst, IL 60126
(312) 941-7677